

**PARTNERSHIP FOR
RETURN TO READINESS / FAMILY ACTIVITY DAYS**

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

BETWEEN

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR, STATE OF WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON STATE MILITARY DEPARTMENT

WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

70TH REGIONAL READINESS COMMAND, US ARMY RESERVE

NAVY REGION NORTHWEST

THIRTEENTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT

446th AIRLIFT WING, US AIR FORCE RESERVE

MADIGAN ARMY MEDICAL CENTER

WASHINGTON STATE EMPLOYMENT SECURITY DEPARTMENT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

READJUSTMENT COUNSELING SERVICES (RCS) – VET CENTERS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

WASHINGTON STATE HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY

WASHINGTON STATE HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD

STATE BOARD FOR COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES

OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF THE GUARD AND RESERVE

ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON BUSINESS

TRIWEST HEALTHCARE ALLIANCE CORP.

GOVERNOR'S VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

VETERANS INNOVATIONS PROGRAM BOARD

VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION PARTNERS, INCLUDING:

THE AMERICAN LEGION, DEPARTMENT OF WASHINGTON

VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS DEPARTMENT OF WASHINGTON

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS DEPARTMENT OF WASHINGTON

AMVETS DEPARTMENT OF WASHINGTON

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA WASHINGTON STATE COUNCIL

MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART

NORTHWEST CHAPTER OF THE PARALYZED VETERANS OF AMERICA

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR BLACK VETERANS WASHINGTON STATE
COMMAND

AFRICAN AMERICAN PTSD ASSOCIATION

ADVOCATES FOR AMERICAN INDIAN VETERANS

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to define the mutually agreed upon requirements, expectations and obligations of the Washington State Military Department, the 70th Regional Readiness Command, US Army Reserve, Navy Region Northwest, Thirteenth Coast Guard District, the Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), Washington State Employment Security Department, U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, U.S. Department of Labor, TriWest Healthcare Alliance Corp. (TriWest), Veterans Service Organizations and other state veterans' service providers, including the Governor's Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee (VAAC). Additionally, this MOU will define the partnership with the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA). This agreement will augment the ongoing, comprehensive effort to ensure military service members and their families are honored for their valuable and honorable service to our country. The goal of this Memorandum of Understanding is to provide the same level of access to members of the Reserve Components and the National Guard that is currently provided to transitioning members of the Active Components as provided by applicable laws, rules and regulations. It is recognized that the Department of Defense and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs are providing world-class transition service upon return from Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Noble Eagle, and other mobilizations in support of the Global War on Terror to deal with the multitude of medical and mental conditions associated with war. This agreement will focus primarily on "after active-duty" for members of the Reserve Components and the National Guard, and deal with problems and issues military members often face several months or years following military service. This MOU supersedes the MOU between the WA Military Department and all partners signed November 5, 2004, the MOA (Army) signed in 2005, and the MOA (Navy) signed in 2005.

COMMANDER'S INTENT – MAJOR GENERAL TIMOTHY J. LOWENBERG

I want each Commander to conduct a Return to Readiness/ Family Activity Day within three to six months after returning from Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and Noble Eagle as part of their normal drill schedule. The Return to Readiness / Family Activity Day provides service members and their families personalized customer service in understanding and filing for Veteran's benefits and entitlements. Commanders will request and coordinate through their chain-of-command to the Washington Transition Assistance Office, Transition Assistance Advisor, J1, Joint Forces Headquarters (JFHQ), for scheduling. The Transition Assistance Advisor will coordinate with WDVA for consolidating planning and execution of each request.

COMMANDER'S INTENT – MAJOR GENERAL LAWRENCE J. JOHNSON

I want each Army Reserve Commander to initiate activities as specified in this Memorandum of Understanding, and that these activities be scheduled on a regular basis by coordination between the Office of the 70th Regional Readiness Command G-3, Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations (with copy furnished to G-1, Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel, and the Washington Transition Assistance Office).

COMMANDER'S INTENT – REAR ADMIRAL WILLIAM FRENCH

It is my intent that Navy Reserve Units under the command of Navy Reserve Readiness Command Northwest, participate as fully as possible in events described in this Memorandum of Understanding, and where applicable, adapt events to meet the specific needs of Navy Reserve

Personnel. These activities will be coordinated through the Washington State Transition Assistance Office.

COMMANDER'S INTENT – REAR ADMIRAL RICHARD R. HOUCK

I intend to strongly support and encourage Coast Guard Reserve units in the Pacific Northwest to take full advantage of the events and services described in this Memorandum of Understanding and to coordinate these activities through the Washington State Transition Assistance Office.

COMMANDER'S INTENT – BRIGADIER GENERAL ERIC W. CRABTREE

It is my intent that Air Force Reserve Units will participate as fully as possible in events described in this Memorandum of Understanding, and where applicable, adapt events to meet the specific needs of Air Force Reserve Personnel. These activities will be coordinated through the Washington State Transition Assistance Office.

COMMANDER'S INTENT – BRIGADIER GENERAL SHEILA R. BAXTER

It is my intent that Madigan Army Medical Center continues its long standing and strong relationship with the community in support of military personnel and their families from the Reserve Components and the National Guard. We will ensure that our country's service members-past, present, and future- receive the world class medical care they so richly deserve.

WASHINGTON STATE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE OFFICE

The Chief of the National Guard Bureau, LTG H. Steven Blum, recognized the need to provide coordinated service to all returning members of the National Guard and Reserve Components and their families, and created the position of Transition Assistance Advisor at each State Military Department. It was recognized that the services delivered by this office were needed for all members of the Reserve Components, and the Chief encouraged Advisors to provide these essential services for all members of the Reserve Components starting in November 2005. In Washington, the Transition Assistance Advisor works under the auspices of the J-1/HRO, Washington Military Department in direct coordination with and authority of the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs, to provide Guard and Reserve Support Services.

RETURN TO READINESS/FAMILY ACTIVITY DAY

As Reserve and Washington National Guard units return from deployments, we recognize that these personnel – our fellow Washington citizens – are now veterans in the truest sense of the word. They, and their families, will benefit from the collective assistance this MOU establishes.

The signatories and coalition partners of this agreement are joining together to do three things:

- 1) Help honor these military service members and their families for their valuable and honorable service to our Country; and
- 2) Help them deal with the multitude of medical and mental conditions associated with their wartime service and assist with post-deployment status.
- 3) Help returning service members transition to civilian life by assisting them with employment, education, and claims for veterans' entitlements.

Throughout Washington State, Veteran Service Organizations and each of the agencies identified in this MOU will play an integral role as partners in this effort. Teams (described below) will be dispatched to Unit armories or facilities during Return to Readiness/ Family Activity Days to provide information on Veterans Benefits, assistance with VA claims, information on TRICARE medical benefits, and assistance with other matters. Teams will *typically* consist of the following:

- 1) 2 representatives from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veteran's Benefits Administration.
- 2) 1 (minimum) representative from the Veteran's Health Administration.
- 3) 1 TriWest Representative
- 4) 1 (minimum) Employment Security Department representative(s).
- 5) 1 representative from Department of Labor – Veterans Employment & Training Service.
- 6) 1 Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve representative.
- 7) 4 accredited veteran Service Officers.
- 8) 2 Readjustment Counselors or Outreach Technicians.
- 9) 1 Team Leader

While this represents a “typical” team, components such as Washington Basic Health, Military One Source, Washington Higher Education Coordinating Board, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, local employers and colleges and trade schools will be added whenever possible to create a mini-job fair setting. Washington institutions of higher education, including community and technical colleges, currently provide tuition waivers to students who are military veterans, many of whom are members of Guard and Reserve Components. These schools provide counselors and placement specialists who will work with Guard and Reserve Members to develop an appropriate educational plan.

FAMILY SUPPORT

The Transition Assistance Advisor will serve as the point of contact to the Washington National Guard Family Support Network to provide assistance when needed in contacting MOU Partners. The office will be open Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 5:00pm. The purpose of this contact will be to respond to inquiries for information on VA benefits and to provide assistance with all emergent situations the Family Support Coordinator deems necessary. For emergencies during non-business hours and weekends, please refer to Appendix A to this MOU to locate the appropriate agency and individual.

▪ Family Education/Assistance

During the time of deployment, WDVA and Veteran Service Organizations will provide accredited service officers to attend command briefings and family meetings to provide information and assistance in filing VA compensation claims. Additionally, service officers will assist with information on VA health care and mental health services. With adequate notification, TriWest Healthcare Alliance will make every reasonable effort to provide a Beneficiary Services and Education Representative (BSER) to attend command briefings and family meetings to educate attendees on the TRICARE medical benefits they become eligible for associated with their member's activation. Appropriate TRICARE literature and brochures will also be made available.

▪ Public Education and Supporting Military Kids

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's mission is to prepare Washington Students to live, learn, and work as productive citizens in the 21st century. Supporting local

school districts in creating successful academic transitions for military kids and their families during the deployment process are an important component of this mission and critical to student academic success.

Through its continued involvement in Operation: Military Kids Program, OSPI intends to continue partnerships with the all military branches, particularly the Washington National Guard, and the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Program to conduct outreach in schools providing information and training materials to educators, counselors and other professionals on behavioral issues or other changes they may observe in children of military parents.

In response the Washington Department of Veterans Affairs will provide assistance in promoting Operation Military Kids materials through the agency web site and printed publications. In addition, the agency will develop an outreach program with the Veterans Service Organizations to help disseminate information more widely throughout the state.

VA BENEFITS AND ENTITLEMENTS

▪ Data Sharing

WDVA and the Washington National Guard have entered into a limited data sharing agreement to ensure all Washington National Guard veterans receive a letter from the Governor, The Adjutant General, and the Director of Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs thanking them for their service and encouraging them to seek their various veteran benefits and entitlements. The agreement is made possible through the Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (DD Form –214) that WDVA receives on all service members upon separation from active duty and return to Washington State. WDVA constructed and maintains the database and the Washington National Guard assists in verifying the accuracy of the data. Follow up letters are sent to each returnee to ensure every opportunity is provided to access VA health care, claims assistance, employment services, and mental health services. 70th RRC soldiers, 446th Air Force Reserve, Navy Reserve, and 13th District Coast Guard members also receive a letter from the Governor. By joining this MOU, the Commanders of the 446th Air Force Reserve, 70th RRC, Navy Region Northwest, and 13th US Coast Guard may enter into the data share agreement. In simple terms, an original letter will be sent to soldiers, sailors, and airmen of these commands. If the letter is returned as undeliverable, it will be forwarded to the designated representatives of the command for delivery and an updated address will be provided to the WDVA to correct the database.

▪ Claims Assistance

The Transition Assistance Advisor will coordinate with the WDVA, the Veterans Benefits Administration and Veteran Service Organizations to provide service at the Return to Readiness/ Family Activities or at a specific time and location determined by the Washington National Guard or Reserve Unit Commander. The service officers in cooperation with the Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom Coordinator from the VA Regional Office will be responsible for providing information on all VA benefits and entitlements and will assist with filing for benefits. These Service Officers and Representatives will provide benefit information and take claims from all service members. Upon completion of any event where claims are taken, Veteran Service Officers and Representatives from the VA Regional Office will mark the claim as OIF/OEF/ONE / RTR (Return to Readiness Family Activity) and deliver the

claim to the VARO in an expeditious manner. The service officer or representative taking the claim will provide the veteran with a release of information request (available at each event) to obtain copies of DD Form 214 and Service Medical Records. Service Officers and VARO Representatives are encouraged to provide this release to the Transition Assistance Advisor or RTR/FAD Team Leader who will coordinate with the unit commander to collect a true and complete copy of the requested records. The claim will remain with the service officer or representative. The veteran has an absolute right to privacy. The Transition Assistance Advisor/Team Leader and the unit will NOT be provided a copy of the claim or information on the nature of the claim. It will be the unit commander's responsibility to make these records available to the Transition Assistance Advisor within 14 days of completion of the event. These records will be delivered by the Transition Assistance Advisor to a specific representative designated by the Service Center Manager to be attached to the claim.

▪ **Communication Plan**

WDVA and the Veterans Benefits Administration will work with the Washington National Guard and Reserve Units to ensure the Washington National Guard and Reserve Family Support Networks are fully aware of the assistance and services outlined in this MOU.

VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

This network of Veterans Service Organizations commit to providing service to returning citizen soldiers and their families by associating with other members of this partnership and by attending Return to Readiness / Family Activity Days, supporting local Family Assistance Centers and Family Readiness Groups, and assisting on a case by case basis with returnees facing financial difficulties in their return.

EMPLOYMENT SECURITY DEPARTMENT, WORKSOURCE OPERATION DIVISION

A Statewide Veteran Services Coordinator from the Employment Security Department is available to provide statewide coordination of employment outreach services to units of the Reserve Components and National Guard. Veteran Employment Security Department Staff will consist primarily of Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs) and Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) staff.

WorkSource staff and partners will provide employment services to all veterans and spouses in all WorkSource Centers in Washington. LVER and DVOP specialists are available to serve the more intensive needs.

1. As appropriate, LVER and DVOP staff will provide and facilitate a full range of employment and training services to meet the needs of all veterans, especially newly separated and transitioning military personnel. These services will be provided either on site or referred to WorkSource Centers as necessary.
2. Veteran services may include a combination of self-service, facilitated self-service, group services, one-on-one services, and/or referral to supportive services. Special needs veterans and recently separated veterans with military occupational specialties that are not readily transferable to the civilian workforce will be case managed by DVOPs. This includes veterans with major barriers to employment and who are in need of more intensive services.

3. Examples of employment and training services may include, but are not limited to the following activities:
 - a) Conduct Job Hunter Workshops and/or job clubs;
 - b) Provide job development and referrals;
 - c) Provide vocational guidance;
 - d) Provide labor market information; and/or,
 - e) Provide referrals to training and supportive services.
4. DVOP staff will develop outreach programs in cooperation with the VA Regional Office Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Coordinator, VA Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment, educational institutions, and with employers to ensure maximum assistance is provided to disabled veterans who have completed or are participating in a vocational rehabilitation program.
5. The Washington State Employment Security Department will also provide information and facilitate access for returning veterans to file their Unemployment Insurance Claims.

US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR VETS

Uniformed Service Employment Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) is a federal statute that provides job protections and employment rights to military service member employees who serve on military duty.

Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) staff provides technical assistance to veterans, National Guard members, and reservists who experience problems between their military commitments and civilian jobs. VETS staff also assists employers by providing information about the USERRA statute, explaining employer and employee responsibilities, as well as military leave policies.

When there is an alleged violation of the USERRA statute, a complaint may be filed with VETS. An investigation is conducted and mediation is attempted to formally resolve the issues.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

There are several sources of mental health care available to veterans returning from deployment in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, and other mobilizations in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Each service entity below offers overlapping, yet unique services for the deployment needs of Washington National Guard and Reserve veterans, and family members.

Veterans in Washington State are served by four VA Medical Centers with multiple campuses (VA Puget Sound Health Care System – Seattle and American Lake campuses, VAMC Spokane, VAMC Walla Walla, and VAMC Portland – Vancouver Campus). Services include primary, secondary and tertiary inpatient and outpatient care; long term care; community based outpatient clinics; and home care. Five VA Readjustment Counseling Service Vet Centers, with nine contract providers; and thirty one Washington State Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Outpatient Program contractor sites, as well as behavioral health providers in the TriWest Network, also offer a unique array of readjustment counseling and mental health

services. Veterans suffering from post-deployment stress problems, such as PTSD, depression, or substance use, are likely qualified for services in some or all of these settings. Network participants are skilled at considering the needs of each individual seeking assistance, and making referrals as needed. Therefore, entry at any point in this service network should lead to the best treatment option possible for a given veteran. Services for family members may be more limited to specific programs.

- **VA Medical Centers**

1. Outpatient mental health services, including specialized services for women veterans.
2. Specialized inpatient hospitalization for stress disorders related to traumatic combat stress exposure.
3. Acute inpatient hospitalization for general mental health conditions related to overseas deployment.
4. Residential treatment and psychosocial rehabilitation services.
5. Specialized post-deployment clinic services providing mental health screening and treatment integrated within a primary care medical setting.
6. The four VA Medical Centers within Washington State rely upon one another to serve the health care needs of returning veterans.

- **VA Readjustment Counseling Service – Vet Centers**

1. Readjustment counseling to any eligible Guard or Reserve member who served on active duty under the provisions of Title 10, USC for service in the Global War on Terrorism.
2. Counseling related to combat and sexual trauma, including assessment, individual, family, and group therapy.
3. Treatment may include the veteran and his/her family members when necessary for the readjustment of the veteran.
4. Bereavement services are available to certain family members such as mothers, fathers, siblings, and grandparents.
5. Referral to VA Medical Center and VA Regional Office for specialized treatment and benefits assistance.
6. Pre- and Post-deployment briefings.
7. Emergent need and referral services.
8. When events are scheduled in a Vet Center catchment area, a Vet Center Team Leader will personally coordinate and attend.

- **WDVA Outpatient PTSD Program**

1. A full range of community-based outpatient counseling and mental health services, crisis intervention, deployment, post-deployment, readjustment, and bereavement counseling for veterans and family members offered at 30 sites within the State of Washington.
2. Family counseling related to deployment concerns or issues related to war trauma.
3. Specialized services for men and women veteran survivors of military sexual trauma.
4. Mental health treatment case consultation provided to professionals offering care to veterans and/or family members.

5. Community based crisis care and service consultation to Family Support Network, American Red Cross and others providing services to veterans and families affected by mobilization.
 6. Unique measures will be exercised that ensure confidentiality of client treatment services. Veteran benefits referrals and mental health assessment support.
- The PTSD Program Webpage also lists all VAMC and Vet Center addresses and telephone numbers.

TriWEST HEALTH CARE ALLIANCE

National Guard and Reserve members separating from Active Duty under Title 10 USC, are generally entitled to participate in the Transitional Assistance Management Program (TAMP) for six months (180 days) after separation. Medical and behavioral health care for Guard/Reserve members and their families are available under this program.

TRICARE Reserve Select, a premium based health care plan available to eligible members who remain in the National Guard and Reserves, provides medical and behavioral health care in hospitals and clinics throughout the state.

Information on enrollment and accessing benefits will be provided at pre and post deployment briefings, during Home Station Reverse Soldier Readiness Processing, and Return to Readiness/Family Activity Days when possible. The goal will be to provide this information and access as early and often as possible to assist Reserve and Guard members with all areas of their transition home.

The undersigned agree to make every effort to provide professional and seamless service delivery to returning Washington State members of the Reserves and National Guard and/or their family members. Efforts are underway to enhance the current funding levels in order to make as many treatment resources available as will be needed. The expressed goal of these services is to minimize the impact of war upon the Washington Reserve or National Guard member and family members, and to encourage the member's use of all services and benefits which may assist to create the best post-deployment adjustment possible.

Mike Gregoire
First Gentleman
Office of the Governor, State of Washington

John E. Lee
Director
Washington Department of Veterans Affairs

Timothy J. Lowenberg, Major General
The Adjutant General
Director, Military Department

Lawrence J. Johnson, Major General
70th Regional Readiness Command
US Army Reserve

William French, Rear Admiral
Commander
Navy Region Northwest

Richard R. Houck, Rear Admiral
Commander
Thirteenth Coast Guard District

Eric W. Crabtree, Brigadier General, USAFR
Commander, 446th Airlift Wing

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